



**Convention on the
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COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Twenty-third session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 608th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 24 January 2000, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mrs. OUEDRAOGO

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GE.00-40532 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES (agenda item 6) (continued)

Initial report of Grenada [CRC/C/3/Add.55; CRC/C/Q/GREN/1; written replies to the questions raised in the list of issues (document without a symbol distributed in English only)]

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, the members of the delegation of Grenada resumed their places at the Committee table

2. Mrs. HOOD (Grenada) said that the divorce rate in Grenada was not very high; many households were run by single mothers who very often did not reveal the father's identity. When a child had been recognized by the father, the mother could ask for child support. If the child was not recognized, it had for some time been possible for a judge to order affiliation proceedings on the basis of a DNA test. In the case of a divorce, the father paid maintenance for children enrolled in school, up to the age of 18. However, no remedy existed in cases where an emigrant father did not pay maintenance voluntarily. Since 1995 the legislation enabled out-of-wedlock children to inherit from their fathers.

3. Foster care had existed for a long time in Grenada, but took place on an unofficial basis. Mothers who emigrated to North America or Europe left their children with members of their family until they were able to send for them. Most adopted children were adopted by emigrant parents, who wished in particular to help pay for their studies. In such cases written consent was required from the father and mother remaining in Grenada.

4. The Child Welfare Authority, established in 1999, was responsible for inspecting institutions caring for children and especially for ensuring observance of the legislative provisions protecting children as to the length of stay in such institutions, conditions for release and visiting rights.

5. The Adoption Board, established in 1994, supervised all adoptions, in particular by establishing contacts with the child welfare services of other countries in order to check up on the well-being of children adopted by foreigners. However, Grenada did not encourage intercountry adoption (there were only a dozen such cases per year on average).

6. Regarding the choice to adopt girls rather than boys, it was difficult to go against families' personal preferences. In most cases, the children were adopted by members of the extended family.

7. As far as cooperation with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) was concerned, the Government was represented on the National Coalition for the Rights of the Child, comprising representatives of NGOs, whose objective was to implement the provisions of the Convention. The Coalition had recently begun receiving a State subsidy, and the members of its governing body were elected.

8. Teenage mothers who wished to resume their studies were able to place their children in day care centres or nursery schools. Fathers, especially those who had recognized their children, were also encouraged to help raise the child.
9. The age of mandatory schooling had been increased to 16, but it was not unusual for children to be older than 16 on completing their secondary studies.
10. Regarding the information to the effect that 10 per cent of births were not declared, it was true that not all births were registered immediately - extra time was allowed when the mother gave birth at home - but that was becoming less and less usual, as women were encouraged to give birth in hospital; moreover, a birth certificate was compulsory to register a child in a day care centre or in school or to obtain health benefits for him or her.
11. The concept of "enemy country" applied to countries which did not have relations with Grenada.
12. An ombudsman's post was shortly to be established by decree, and funds would be allocated for the ombudsman's activities.
13. With regard to the deterrent effect of the tax collected for all children leaving Grenada for the purpose of family reunification, she said the amount requested (about \$50) was nominal in comparison with the cost of an aeroplane ticket, and derogations could be granted in certain cases.
14. The Child Welfare Act designated the Child Welfare Authority as the body responsible for establishing standards for the operation of children's institutions. Since its establishment the Authority had inspected all children's institutions and placed each of them under the responsibility of one of its officials. The Authority was also responsible for the training of staff working in children's institutions.
15. The association National Children's Home (NCH) Action for Children was the only association dealing with foster care. It was State-subsidized and its activities were supervised by the Child Welfare Authority. The Authority was also responsible for the establishment of precise guidelines concerning placement of children, preparation of foster families and the possibility of children returning to their natural families.
16. Although the Education Act contained no provisions on the subject, the Government believed that corporal punishment should not be used in schools, but its view encountered strong resistance. It intended to delve further into that question, and all questions relating to violence in the country, at a later date.
17. To combat the increase in cases of ill-treatment and incest, the Government was in the process of enacting very strict legislation which did not tolerate any of those acts. The Child Welfare Act and the Domestic Violence Act provided for psychosociological assistance for those responsible for violence. Assistance was also provided for the victims, individually or together with their families.

18. More than the failure to pay maintenance, the main causes of children dropping out of school were the high level of emigration of natural parents, inadequate children's care and juvenile crime. The Government had set up a programme for children aged 14 and above who were under-achievers in school, designed to provide them with basic skills and help them integrate into society. It tried to assign as many resources as possible to the education of young people.

19. Mrs. TIGERSTEDT-TÄHTELÄ asked how children not registered at birth, especially children under six months of age, were followed medically.

20. Mrs. DANIEL (Grenada) said that all children received medical coverage, whether or not their birth had been registered. The primary health care programme contained a chronic illness component and a mother-and-child health component. Pregnant women were followed medically and gave birth in hospital, except in emergency cases. After delivery, the child received comprehensive medical attention (vaccinations, etc.).

21. The CHAIRPERSON noted that the delegation had not replied to the questions concerning the decision to release children placed in institutions, the ratification of the Hague Convention and the minimum age for purchase of alcoholic beverages.

22. Mrs. HOOD (Grenada) said that the Child Welfare Act contained clear provisions regarding the length of children's stays in institutions. The Government provided assistance to families which agreed to receive children when they left such institutions, in the form of an allowance covering maintenance for the child and the purchase of uniforms and books. Concerning the sale of alcohol to minors, even if the legislation was not always applied, the Government had taken a number of measures in the last three years, one of which was to prohibit the sale of alcohol in places where inter-school and inter-university sports events were held.

23. The CHAIRPERSON invited the members of the Committee to ask questions on the monitoring of the Convention, basic health and welfare, education, leisure and cultural activities and special protection measures.

24. Mrs. MOKHUANE asked how children were protected against domestic violence in the legal sphere, in particular, and against abuse and negligence. Were absentee fathers common, and if so, what role did such fathers play in raising their children and what measures did the State party take to strengthen the self-image of small boys lacking male role models?

25. She would appreciate explanations of the fluctuations noted in the rates of infant mortality, immunization coverage and incidence of sexually transmitted diseases, and information on the progress achieved in the area of breastfeeding since the 1995 campaign.

26. She would like to know the incidence of HIV/AIDS and whether Grenada had adopted a specific policy for protecting children against AIDS since the preparation of the report.

27. Teenage pregnancies were frequent; was it known what proportion of such pregnancies was due to incest? In addition, there were numerous suicide attempts among teenage girls.

Had there been an effort to find out the reasons for their attempts and to establish which suicide methods were used most frequently? Was psychological assistance available for teenage girls in distress?

28. What was done to make life easier for disabled children and to provide them with free access to school buildings? Had other countries' standards on access for the disabled been studied?

29. She welcomed the fact that no malnutrition problems existed, but wondered whether measures were taken to prevent vitamin deficiency and anaemia. Finally, she would like to know whether progress was being made in decentralizing the health services, whether studies had been made of the extent to which the health services were used and whether the sickness insurance system covered the low-income and unemployed sectors.

30. Mrs. KARP asked whether the legislation set a threshold for the number of qualified staff members to be assigned to every children's institution and a time period following which placement decisions had to be reviewed. She would like to know the composition of the team recently established to combat incest and sexual abuse. She noted that the State party was eligible for technical assistance in establishing a juvenile justice system.

31. Mrs. RILANTONO said she was concerned at the number of teenage pregnancies and asked whether the school curricula included sex education. She was not clear whether the legislation explicitly prohibited abortion.

32. She would also appreciate information on the causes of the very high rates of failure of school examinations and on the level of development of school libraries. Lastly, she asked whether the youth organizations were all purely leisure-oriented or whether some were linked to political parties.

33. Mrs. HOOD (Grenada) said that a very complete bill against domestic violence, which included protection of children, the role of the police, obligation for the guilty party to receive treatment and the possibility of obliging the guilty party to leave the home, had been prepared with the help of the police, religious authorities and society at large, based on the legislations of other countries in the region; the bill would be submitted to Parliament for approval very shortly.

34. Some 45 per cent of households were single-parent households, but in most cases the father visited the children frequently. It was a deeply-rooted custom in Grenadian culture for a father not to live with the mother and children, and such a situation was regarded as acceptable. That custom was on the decline, however, owing to the growing use of contraception and to changes in attitudes, with younger couples preferring to live together. However, the problem of lack of male role models for little boys was not neglected and the Division of Women's Affairs had set up a mentoring programme to help boys establish ties with men from the community who would provide good role models.

35. The high proportion of women who did not breastfeed was due to the fact that they returned to work only three months after the birth. The actual situation was more complex, however, as in general children were bottle-fed during the day but breastfed at night after the

mother had finished her working day. Awareness-raising campaigns and a UNICEF-sponsored programme were being conducted, and teenage girls in homes for single mothers were encouraged to breastfeed their babies.

36. The Government was actively engaged in promoting birth control and preventing sexually transmitted diseases. Sex education, including awareness-raising with regard to HIV/AIDS, was included in the school curricula and in poster, radio and television campaigns. Contraceptive pills and condoms could be obtained free of charge. It was not known how many pregnancies had been due to incest. Incest victims were generally reluctant to speak out; when they did, the case was brought before the courts and psychological counselling was provided to both victim and perpetrator. In addition, social workers received special training to enable them to detect possible cases of incest and provide assistance.

37. In a country as small as Grenada, the entire population was upset by every case of adolescent suicide. In 1999, two youths apparently without problems had taken their own lives. As always under such circumstances, social workers from the Ministry of Education had gone to their school to provide their classmates with psychological counselling. The most commonly used method of suicide was hanging and the second most common method was substances taken internally.

38. There was a bus service for taking disabled children to school and to specialized activities, and all newly-constructed public buildings were equipped with access ramps.

39. The incidence of gonorrhoea among young people was due to the fact that infected older men believed they could cure themselves by having sexual relations with girls. That practice was included in a law characterizing sexual relations with minors 16 or younger as rape, and gonorrhoea was expected to decline in the coming years as a result.

40. Abortion was illegal in Grenada, except in cases where the pregnancy endangered the mother's life.

41. Health care was accessible to all, including unemployed people and the most disadvantaged people, who received free medicines. As part of the decentralization of the health services, clinics had been established in all the districts. The Steering Committee recently established in the Ministry of Health was aimed at reforming the public health system. In addition, the Child Welfare Authority was required to take measures to enhance the protection of children. The treatment and rehabilitation teams, which included social workers and members of the police, received refresher training in order to provide abused children with the best possible assistance. A separate juvenile justice system was currently being prepared on the basis of a broad series of consultations held throughout the country.

42. Health classes were held at the primary school level. Secondary education was not yet accessible to all, and being forced to stop school was often perceived as a failure. Secondary school enrolment for all children was one of the Government's objectives. Every school had its own library. Children who so wished could join cultural, religious or political organizations, but the latter had never been very popular with young Grenadians.

43. Mr. RABAH drew attention to a report prepared by a number of NGOs represented on the National Coalition for the Rights of the Child, which painted a rather negative picture of the situation of children in Grenada, in particular where education and juvenile justice were concerned. According to the report, the recidivism rate among young offenders in some districts was approximately 50 per cent and the school drop-out rate over 60 per cent. The authors of the report made a point of establishing a link between those two figures. Could the delegation provide clarifications in that connection?

44. Mrs. HOOD (Grenada) said that, although she was not aware of the report in question, she was certain that the rate of school attendance was much higher than the figure given.

45. As Chairperson of the Prison Monitoring Committee, she was in possession of some very accurate data concerning children in prison, of whom there were currently three. In recent years, the social services had cooperated with judges to obtain alternative sentences for most young offenders. From 1995 to 1999, of some 120 young offenders convicted, only 20 or so had reportedly committed a second offence. She noted that no recidivism had been reported among young people who had followed the classes conducted by the Prison Education Service.

46. Mrs. MOKHUANE said she was surprised to hear the information supplied by the delegation to the effect that pupils perceived being obliged to leave school as a failure even when it was simply a question of financial considerations. Were the authorities aware of the psychological harm such feelings caused to children? In which areas was the lack of textbooks felt? How had the school curricula been reformed?

47. Much remained to be done in the area of sanitation, as the high number of pit latrines still existing in the country seemed to explain the frequent cases of gastroenteritis. Had measures been taken to combat coastal pollution and to monitor water quality? Finally, she asked the reason for health workers' lack of motivation and whether consideration was being given to increasing the Ministry of Health budget.

48. Mrs. KARP asked to which services teenagers could turn for help, especially in the psychological area.

49. Mr. DOEK encouraged the Grenadian authorities to ratify the ILO Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), thereby raising the age of admission to employment from 14 to 15.

50. Mrs. HOOD (Grenada), noting first of all that children attending a private school could nearly always continue their secondary schooling in the same school, said that the results of the examination for admission to public secondary education were not posted in order not to upset the children. In any event there were plans gradually to eliminate that examination. Textbooks, which were as yet too costly, differed from one region to another, but the authorities were attempting to introduce a textbook lending system and to standardize teaching materials throughout the island. NGOs and private companies provided scholarships for the neediest pupils. Grenada had been the first of the Caribbean islands to equip schools with computers, and the school curricula had been revised to take account of the new technologies, in particular data processing.

51. Mrs. DANIEL (Grenada) said that sanitation in the country was improving, which should lead to a decrease in cases of gastroenteritis. A central sewage system was operating in Saint George's and there were plans to connect all the heavily-populated urban areas to the system. The Ministry of Health environmental services were in charge of water monitoring. As the low rainfall during the dry season always raised health problems, an initiative had been launched to pump water from a large lake and distribute water resources equally throughout the territory.

52. Health workers did lack motivation; they knew that employment conditions were better in some of the neighbouring countries and were therefore tempted to seek jobs abroad.

53. Mrs. HOOD (Grenada) said that the Child Welfare Authority would shortly be establishing a body to which abused children - who already had access to a special telephone line - could submit complaints. Teenagers not enrolled in school were included in an activities, support and consultation network. In addition, the University of Saint George's provided refresher training for anyone who wished to raise his or her educational level. The suggestion concerning the ratification of ILO Convention No. 138 would be transmitted to the authorities.

The meeting was suspended at 5.05 p.m. and resumed at 5.15 p.m.

54. Mrs. MOKHUANE noted with appreciation that the State party's report had been prepared according to the Committee's guidelines, that the delegation had included detailed information on the situation of children in Grenada in its preliminary observations and that the delegation included representatives of NGOs which were members of the Coalition for the Rights of the Child, whose knowledge of policies on children and of children's institutions had enabled the Committee to make a complete assessment of the situation regarding the human rights of children in the country. The Committee welcomed the establishment of the Coalition, whose mission was to coordinate, administer, evaluate and implement the principles of the Convention; she recommended that the Government should pursue its efforts to increase the Coalition's financial and human resources.

55. Despite the various programmes conducted and the efforts made to achieve legislative reforms, much remained to be done, especially in the area of juvenile justice. The Committee suggested that the Government of Grenada should prepare a general children's code in order to bring the country's legislation into conformity with the Convention in that area. Grenada might request technical assistance from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights for that purpose.

56. Another area where progress was needed was data collection, but the Committee noted that the Government of Grenada was working towards that objective.

57. The Committee was particularly concerned at the question of the definition of the child and requested that the Government of Grenada should continue its legislative reform in that area. It was willing to believe, as the delegation had stated, that birth registration raised no problems in Grenada.

58. The Committee regretted that there were no policies for combating HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases, although it noted that a workshop on HIV/AIDS had been held.

59. The Committee welcomed the initiatives taken to address the problem of violence in the family and to raise children's self-esteem in school and the family.

60. In the field of education, the Committee appreciated the construction of new secondary schools and the fact that dropping out of school was a problem of limited scope in Grenada. The Committee commended the food programme operating in pre-school and primary school establishments and the high quality of textbooks.

61. The Committee also welcomed the Government's efforts in connection with the Family Court.

62. The situation regarding special protection measures remained disturbing. The system as a whole needed to be restructured and reorganized.

63. The Committee encouraged the Government of Grenada to ratify ILO Convention No. 138 and the Hague Convention relating to intercountry adoption.

64. The Committee recommended that the Government of Grenada should disseminate the report throughout the country and continue its training programmes for people working with children and awareness-raising efforts among judges.

65. Mrs. KARP welcomed the efforts made to change people's attitudes and bring them to regard children as subjects of law and active members of society, a concept which conveyed respect for the child and his or her dignity.

66. Regarding violence against children, it was necessary to set up appropriate structures to provide protection, treatment and rehabilitation for child victims. There was a need to increase financial resources designed to provide professionals, especially social workers and psychologists, with the means of doing their work.

67. Mrs. HOOD (Grenada) said that the Government and people of Grenada were aware of their responsibilities in the area of protection of and respect for children. All the necessary procedures would be put in place. The Committee's recommendations and concerns would be brought to the attention of the Government of Grenada, which would use them as a basis for formulating concrete measures.

68. The CHAIRPERSON said that she was concerned at the question of early pregnancy and the impact of single-parent families on children's well-being. She recommended that the Government should take adequate measures, on a preventive basis, to counteract any risk of the scourge of sexual exploitation being inflicted on the children of Grenada. In conclusion, she said that the Committee did not doubt the State party's ability to meet the challenges which remained.

The meeting rose at 5.35 p.m.